



STATE OF MAINE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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Testimony of the Maine Public Utilities Commission

Neither For Nor Against

LD 596, Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure

March 11, 2025

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology (Committee), my name is Deirdre Schneider, testifying neither for nor against LD 596, Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure on behalf of the Public Utilities Commission (Commission).

The Commission is not offering any direct testimony on the Resolve but would like to take this opportunity to provide the Committee with some background information and an update on the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program (Program).

Pursuant to Public Law 2021, chapter 380, the Commission initiated a request for proposals (RFP) on November 29, 2021, for transmission to connect renewable generation projects located in northern Maine with the electric grid operated by ISO-NE. At the conclusion of that RFP the Commission selected one bidder to construct the transmission line and one bidder to construct a wind facility.¹ Ultimately that procurement was terminated without any contracts being approved.

During the last legislative session, Public Law 2023, chapter 660 was enacted that made several changes to the Program. On May 10, 2024, the Commission issued a request for information (RFI) and indications of interest relating to the amended Program.² As indicated, the Commission wanted to perform more work on the front end of this process to ensure a successful procurement.

Before the establishment of the Program and over the last several years activities have been underway relating to transmission planning at ISO-NE. Specifically, in 2020, Governor Mills joined four other New England governors in calling for an improved partnership with ISO-NE to support state energy policies. This collaboration led to the regional "Vision Statement," which emphasized the need for ISO-NE to develop a regional transmission plan aligned with the states' energy transition goals.

In February 2024, ISO-NE released the "2050 Transmission Study," identifying critical transmission infrastructure necessary to achieve the region's decarbonization objectives. Maine played a significant role in this process as Chair Bartlett and Commission staff worked closely with ISO-NE and other New

¹ Docket No. 2021-00369

² Docket No. 2024-00099

England states to shape essential tariff revisions, resulting in the new Longer-Term Transmission Planning (LTTP) process.

Under the LTTP framework, NESCOE can request that ISO-NE solicit proposals for transmission projects addressing the needs outlined in the 2050 Transmission Study. Following FERC's approval of the tariff revisions in July 2024, there was uncertainty regarding the geographical focus of the first LTTP solicitation, as many candidate areas had been identified in the 2050 Transmission Study. The participants from the Commission were active in focusing NESCOE on opportunities to eliminate transmission bottlenecks in Maine that have long hindered development of the State's abundant, lower-cost wind resources. Ultimately, the New England states agreed to locate the first LTTP solicitation in Maine in a way that will seamlessly integrate with and reduce Maine ratepayer costs associated with the upcoming Northern Maine transmission line and renewable energy solicitation pursuant to the Program. On December 18, 2024, NESCOE issued a letter formally requesting ISO-NE proceed with the first LTTP solicitation with those goals in mind. ISO-NE responded swiftly and expects to issue the first RFP under the LTTP process by the end of March 2025. That RFP is expected to result in all of the upgrades needed, as well as a new substation, to enable the interconnection of at least 1,200 MW of onshore wind in Northern Maine.

Due to these latest developments, the Commission plans to issue another RFI before proceeding with an RFP for transmission and renewable generation under the Program. The Commission anticipates issuing the RFI in the very near future. The timing of the RFP itself will depend on the information received in the RFI as well as the ISO-NE LTTP solicitation process. Our goal is to proceed with the RFP as soon as we have sufficient clarity from the ISO-NE procurement to enable us to identify the interconnection point for our project.

The Commission will update the Committee on any progress made towards the procurements required under the Program.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information for the work session.